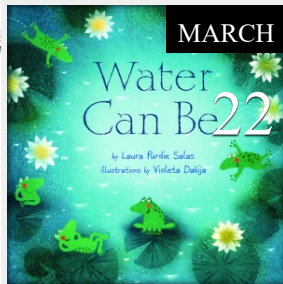


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HOW BOOKS CHANGE (US) BY LAURA PURDIE SALAS

POSTED BY CBETHM ON MARCH 22, 2014
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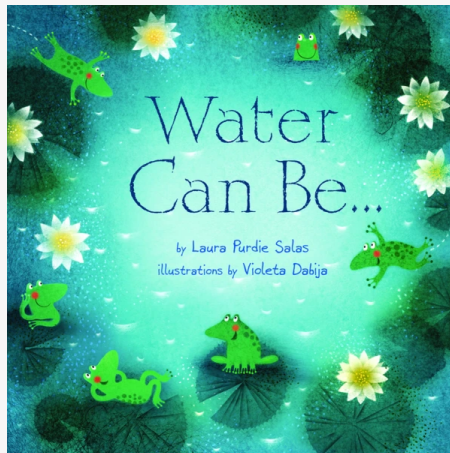
LAURA PURDIE SALAS

One of my favorite things about books is their power to change. First, the writing itself changes. My new book *Water Can Be...* (Millbrook Press, Apr. 1, 2014) started out as *A River Can Be...* When I sent it to my editor Carol Hinz, she pointed out that not all kids have rivers nearby, so it would lack the

universality of *A Leaf Can Be...* So, I started again, broadening my topic to water. Only six or seven lines survived the transformation (I was especially sad to lose “Barge floater /Canyon eroder”!). But the revision evoked tons of memories of thunderstorms, sprinklers, lakes, pools, rivers, and the ocean from my Florida childhood. I was part kid, part mermaid! I poured my love of water into the manuscript. And I thought I was finished.

Fast forward: The editing was complete, and it was dedication time. I decided to dedicate the book to my parents, whose love of nature and water led to most of my earliest memories: failing to get off a ski lift at the top of the mountain at age four, boiling creek water to drink on Appalachian Mountains backpacking trips, and canoeing in lakes close to home while looking out for alligators. I thought about what my life would have been like without water adventures. I worried about kids who live in desert areas with no water fun. And, inevitably, my melancholy train of thought pulled into the station called What About Kids Who Have NO Water? Not just for fun, but to drink, to stay clean, to cook food. I learned that 2,000 kids around the world die every day from a lack of clean water. Then I wished I could unlearn that fact.

Last fall, I decided to donate part of my proceeds from *Water Can Be...* to [WaterAid](#), a charity doing amazing work to bring clean water, sanitation, and hygiene to people around the world. My donations may not add up to



much, but every \$25 makes a difference. It makes a change for someone, somewhere. (I'll be tracking it on my site once the book is out.)

Oops. I digress. So. The book changed from one water topic to another. I changed from someone who took water for granted into someone taking a tiny action to improve the water situation. Water itself changes every living thing in our world. And now, as *Water Can Be...* reaches readers, I'm hoping for more changes, big and small. Books changed my childhood. They changed me, from a lonely, left-out kid into a kid who loved to learn and explore, who never felt lonely as long as she had books around. Maybe this book will make some kid think:

1.
I didn't know clouds were water. What else is water?
2.
I'm lucky to have all the water I want.
3.
Let's go to the beach!
4.
I wish I could make beautiful art. Maybe I'll try drawing something.
5.
I'm going to write my own Can Be... book.

Any of those reactions would make me so happy!

Today, March 22, 2014, is International Water Day, and it's a perfect day to think about water. What water memories do you have? What form do you see it in most often? (Now that I live in Minnesota, I'm, um, intimately familiar with snow and ice.) I cared about water when I started writing this book. But I care even more now, and caring—that's the best change that books make.



Laura Purdie Salas is a Minnesota poet and writer. She has written more than 120 books, including A Leaf Can Be... and BookSpeak! Poems About Books. Her books have received honors, such as Bank Street Best Books; IRA Teachers' Choice; NCTE Notable

Children's Books; Minnesota Book Award; Riverby Award for Nature Books; Cybils Poetry Award; a Nerdy(!), and more. Laura loves water in all seasons and all forms. She's been skiing, snowshoeing, canoeing, swimming, snorkeling, whitewater rafting, canyoning, kayaking, and more—she does some better than others!

For more information, see the following links:

Laura's site at <http://www.laurasalas.com>
WaterAid's site at <http://www.wateraid.org/us>

